

September 2, 2022

West Hartford Pedestrian & Bicycle Commission
c/o Edward Pawlak, Chair
38 Westland Avenue
West Hartford, CT 06107

Re: State Project No. L155-0004 New Park Avenue Complete Streets Improvements
PBC Comments & August 26, 2022 Meeting

Dear Mr. Pawlak,

The Town of West Hartford (Town) recently attended the August 26, 2022 Special Meeting of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission (PBC) in response to the PBC's written request (letter dated 7/25/2022) to hold an in-person working session for the referenced project.

During this meeting, the 35% level design plans were reviewed and the four comments from the 7/25/2022 PBC letter were discussed in detail. It should be noted that many of the PBC comments were similar to comments from the 7/7/2022 and 7/23/2022 walk audits; an 8/15/22 Bike West Hartford, Inc. email; and two emails from individual Town residents.

The Town offers the following responses to the PBC's comments, as discussed at the 8/26/22 meeting:

- 1) *Comment: ...We recommend that the Road Diet be extended as far north and south as possible within the project limits...*

Response: For the southern end of the project, approaching New Britain Avenue, the Town agrees to review the inclusion of bike lanes. This would result in the elimination of a southbound turn lane approaching New Britain Avenue, effectively creating a road diet.

For the north end of the project (Talcott Road to West Hartford Place), the Town does not plan to implement a traditional three-lane road diet, which is only one of many complete street treatments available. This road section does feature other complete streets improvements including an off-road separated multi-use sidepath, center raised medians, and the removal of a through lane between Oakwood Avenue and Talcott Road in the southbound direction. Regarding the separation of sidewalks from the roadway, the Town will explore the shifting of excess travel lane width to a shoulder on the east side of the road, if feasible.

- 2) *Comment: "...For continuity, and especially for bicyclist safety, we recommend that a 10-foot wide multi-use pathway, physically separated from on-street infrastructure by bollards or similar, be installed along the entirety of the western side of the project corridor (i.e., from New Britain Avenue to the Chick-fil-A driveway)..."*

Response: As discussed at the 8/26/22 meeting, an off-road 10' wide multi-use sidepath is not feasible south of Talcott Road, due to utility conflicts and project scope. However, the Town committed to revisiting the feasibility of an on-street two-way cycle track located on the west side of New Park Avenue between New Britain Avenue and Talcott Road. The Town previously explored the on-street two-way cycle track as part of the 2017 New Park Avenue Transit Area Complete Streets Study, but had concerns about signal phasing & timing, driveway conflicts, and future maintenance obligations.

The cycle track concept would include a two-way bike lane painted on the roadway, separated from vehicle traffic by a vertical separation device. The vertical separator could be one of several devices such as flexible pylons or a raised curb, but would provide physical separation in contrast to a painted buffer. The west sidewalk would be maintained in this concept, effectively separating pedestrians and cyclists.

North of Talcott Road, the 8' wide multi-use sidepath would serve both pedestrians and cyclists. The Town's plan is to construct this sidepath at an 8' width in order to preserve mature trees along the corridor and avoid other physical conflicts.

- 3) *Comment: ...While we recognize it is beyond the scope of the current New Park Avenue project, we strongly recommend that you investigate the feasibility of eventually upgrading the existing sidewalk that runs from Flatbush Avenue to the West Hartford Place driveway to a 10-foot wide multi-use pathway in the near future...*

Response: The 2017 study identified this sidewalk corridor as a potential future connection. This in part is what led the current design to choose the multi-use sidepath between Talcott Road and West Hartford Place. The upgrade of the existing walk would be an excellent connection to other bicycle facilities. As noted by the PBC, unfortunately, this extension is outside the scope of the current project. The Town will consider the feasibility of this project in the future as resources allow.


- 4) *Comment: We recommend that you design the project to provide connections, where possible, to existing and potential future bicycle facilities in neighboring municipalities (e.g., Hartford, Newington, etc.)*

Response: The Town has reached out to both Hartford and Newington in the past to discuss inter-municipality bicycle connections and will continue to do so. One past example of this was the extension of bike facilities on South Main Street into Newington (West Hartford Road). Proactive planning and design by both communities allowed the bike facilities to be constructed in different phases, but with a connected final product. One future indirect connection to New Park Avenue could be to trail segments along South Branch Park River via the New Britain Avenue corridor.

As stated above, the Town will further review Comments 1 and 2 as part of the current project, while postponing Comments 3 and 4 to future projects. This review will focus on the inclusion of bike lanes or a cycle track south of Trout Brook Trail to New Britain Avenue, the inclusion of a two-way cycle track between Trout Brook Trail and Talcott Road (in lieu of bike lanes); and the interface between those two project elements. The Town will seek input from other stakeholders as part of this review, including adjacent properties and Public Works. The determination of this review will be shared with PBC and other stakeholders as soon as it is available, prior to advancing the 70% Semi-Final Design plans. As with the 35% plans, the 70% plans will be shared with PBC and other stakeholders.

If you have any questions about the project in the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Gregory Sommer, P.E.
Town Engineer

C: James Brennan, P.E., Project Manager/Assistant Town Engineer
Duane Martin, P.E., Director of Community Development
Richard Ledwith, Town Manager
Bike West Hartford, Inc.